

Cannabis Therapy Patient Assessment Tool

Selecting the right patient is crucial for successful medical cannabis therapy. Due to the complexity of medical cannabis treatment, continual education, and close patient monitoring are necessary. Furthermore, medical cannabis should not be the first line of treatment, and it is important to carefully choose appropriate patients who would benefit from it. Key factors to consider when selecting patients include:

- ▶ **Qualifying condition.** They include Chronic Pain (most common), ALS, Alzheimer's, Autism, Cachexia, Crohn's, Debilitating seizures, Epilepsy, HIV, Hospice care, MS, Persistent Nausea, Persistent or acute pain, Persistent muscle spasms, PTSD, Rare conditions, Terminal illness, Ulcerative colitis.
- ▶ **Absence of contraindications.** They include Pregnancy and lactation, Unstable cardiac conditions, allergy to cannabinoids, Psychiatric diagnoses – Schizophrenia Spectrum, Immunocompromise
- ▶ **Age & Experience.** Cannabis therapy is mostly for adults and has the greatest success at ages greater than 30 years old. It is restricted in children for only certain conditions or situations. Approval from the Compassionate Use Board is required for minors.
- ▶ **Experience with other controlled substances, treatments & medicine.** A patient's experience with prescribed medicines and treatment may help in many ways with the complexities of cannabis therapy. Familiarity with dosing, titration, managing side effects, and avoiding tolerance and dependence, among other factors, are helpful to review. Also, experience with addiction, abuse, or other problems may also be a factor in their ability to manage this type of treatment.
- ▶ **Mindset about Cannabis & willingness to be objective.** Combined with previous experience with other medicines or controlled substances, their current attitudes and mindset about Cannabis therapy may be reviewed to assess their ability to be objective about the effects of treatment. Being able to reassure and assuage fears is often necessary, as well as not overstating the potential benefit.
- ▶ **Ability to self-evaluate, calculate dose, and journal effects.** Along with objectivity is the patient's ability to reliably assess positive and negative effects and communicate that with the provider. Also, the ability to understand the different doses, forms, and types of products is essential in managing treatment.
- ▶ **Realistic expectations.** Having a thorough discussion with the patient (especially those naïve to cannabis) is essential to having success. Reviewing the endocannabinoid system's function and the effects of the medicine can help prepare patients for what it can do and what it cannot do.
- ▶ **Set goals for therapy.** After expectations have been discussed and set, specific goals of therapy can be established. This will help both the patient and provider to know when the therapy is successful or not, and this may also help avoid pitfalls of overdose, overuse, or disappointment in treatment effects or other problems.
- ▶ **Well-known to the provider & good communication.** When a good doctor-patient relationship exists, then the increased trust and communication will serve to facilitate ongoing treatment adjustments, management, and appropriate follow-up. Having good longevity with a patient (such as in the primary care setting) helps to ensure good communication, knowledge, understanding, and ultimately successful treatment.